

I would like to take this opportunity to explain what has happened in the past few days regarding "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Earlier this week, I submitted an amendment prohibiting the use of funds in the Defense Appropriations Act to investigate or discharge our brave service men and women on the grounds of "telling" their sexual orientation. Don't Ask, Don't Tell provides that a service member can be separated from the Armed Forces for stating that he or she is a homosexual or bisexual. While my amendment would not have repealed the law, withholding this funding would have brought us one step closer to the legislative repeal necessary to eliminate it once and for all.

Due to pressure from some of my Congressional colleagues and the White House, I withdrew my amendment. I believe that we should not be booting out qualified service members just because they are honest about whom they are, let alone appropriating funds to this end. I, like so many others, am deeply troubled that we are not addressing Don't Ask, Don't Tell at this time. I keep hearing the rhetoric "next year, next year" with regard to acting to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

I realize that this issue is considered controversial, but it should not be. The numbers speak for themselves. According to recent polls, as much as 75 percent of Americans support openly gay service members in the military. Americans recognize that forcing men and women out of the military on the basis of sexual orientation is not only blatantly discriminatory, but harms our national security and, indeed, runs counter to the values of our Armed Forces.

While the blatant bigotry of this law is reason enough to push forward its repeal, our country is also engaged in two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I can assure you that we cannot afford to spare any of our dedicated combat veterans, intelligence officers, linguists, and aviators to Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Since President Obama took office in January, 326 service members have been discharged, and counting. This is not only absurd, but costly. To date, our military has already spent over \$95.1 million on retraining soldiers because of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

And what's more, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, Commander of the U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, is expected to report his reassessment of the war against Taliban insurgents in two weeks, which could include a request for even more American troops next year.

Last month, I wrote a letter to President Obama and had 76 other Members of Congress join me in explaining what he can do right now to put a stop to the humiliating investigations and devastating discharges conducted under the purview of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. And that is exactly what I was attempting to do with my amendment. Don't Ask, Don't Tell is plain wrong. It is wrong now and it will be wrong next year. I stand ready to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell with my colleagues in Congress **today!**

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